

Paul: [00:00:01](#) Ladies and gentlemen, angry Americans around the country, around the globe, we have a very, very special guest joining us today on this episode. Somebody I've been so eager to talk to for a long time. A man I admire, a man who inspires me and a man who is very much in many different ways of man of the moment coming to us live from Brooklyn, New York, one of the epicenters of the fight in the coronavirus, the great and powerful Jeffrey Wright.

Jeffrey: [00:01:47](#) Well thanks Paul for having me. You're easy to impress.

Paul: [00:01:52](#) Well, I really am so grateful to you making time. Number one because you're pretty deep into fight, but number two because you're a cool guy, you're a generous guy, you've been very supportive of me over the years, you're supportive of so many people in so many different areas, high profile and low profile. But first of all just how are you doing man? You're in Brooklyn with your family. Can you give us a sense of how you're doing, how your family's doing and what it's like where you are, really deep in a battleground for the fight against the coronavirus?

Jeffrey: [00:02:24](#) Yeah we, like most people here in New York, are laying low and maintaining as well as we can. I'm in Brooklyn in Fort Green, Brooklyn. I can look out this window and see Brooklyn Hospital just across the way there and that is a hotspot for this as well, and so trying to be supportive of that. But we are just maintaining. I have my 90 year old aunt who is living with me now. My mom passed away last fall. I was raised by two forceful women and they lived together until the time of my mom's passing down in DC so she, my aunt, who's a former nurse, was a nurse at DC General Hospital in Washington, which it's now defunct, formerly a federally funded facility and a safety net facility, she was there for 35 years or something. And so anyway, she's living with us now. So most critical for us is making sure she's okay, giving her a wide circle, sitting on the opposite end of the table from her for meals and, and just keeping her safe.

Jeffrey: [00:03:34](#) So we're doing well, as well as can be expected. I am fortunate in that I reasonably sure I can make it through this thing without too much of a financial undoing. I have a job waiting for me. I was in the middle of filming Batman in London when I headed back this way. So you know, I feel relatively secure in that. Again, I'm fortunate, but trying to stay safe, keeping our health at the foremost of our thinking.

Paul: [00:04:12](#) So I want to dig into a number of elements of this Jeffrey, but just so we can kind of explain to folks how we got to know each

other. I don't know if you know this but I think you started to break out when I was at Amherst in the late '90s, I think it was like '93, '94 I got to Amherst in '94 and then graduated in '98 and I felt like your rise coming out. I don't know when Basquiat came out but you were in the news-

- Jeffrey: [00:04:37](#) Basquiat came out around that time.
- Paul: [00:04:40](#) So you were in the newsletters, you were like a guy from our college that we were all rooting for.
- Jeffrey: [00:04:45](#) Who was doing weird stuff that nobody else was really doing.
- Paul: [00:04:49](#) Yeah. But you were a guy that, I think it's such a small school, it's like 1600 students there, and the alumni I think is pretty well connected, but that's how I first knew of you was just watching your rise. You did Angels in America and Basquiat. And I was always rooting for anybody who was from Amherst. And then fast forward years later we connected I think initially through my work at IAVA.
- Jeffrey: [00:05:13](#) Yes.
- Paul: [00:05:13](#) And you've been so amazing for so many different causes. I don't know if folks know you've supported projects for veterans, you've been incredibly involved politically on Twitter. But getting to know you has been a real privilege and I just want folks to know that you're a very generous guy and I admire how much you're not afraid to throw a punch, you're mixing it up.
- Paul: [00:05:34](#) So I want to maybe start by asking you, how is it being in the entertainment space the way you are, and maybe 10 years ago, actors, artists would have been reluctant to get in the mix, you're out there, man. You're throwing punches every day. You're calling people out. You're, I think, really forcefully and effectively criticizing the president. What's that like for you? And how do you view your role in the landscape before the corona stuff happened? You were, I think, an important voice for America, but how do you view your role now and the ability to make an impact for you as an individual?
- Jeffrey: [00:06:10](#) Well, yeah, I guess, Twitter is what it is. It's a great tool. It's also cesspool. But I'm in there, down in the septic mess. But look, I grew up in Washington DC. My mom was a lawyer for the US government, for customs for 30 some odd years. Everybody in Washington, you know, when you're born in Washington doctor smacks you on your ass and asks you what your political

affiliation is. That's the way it goes, you know? Of course for DC most of us tend to be left leaning, but that's the routine.

Jeffrey: [00:06:47](#) And then I went to Amherst a little before you were there, I was a political science major before I started acting. I didn't start acting until I was a junior, late in my junior year. I took courses with some great political thinkers, some of whom are still there; Austin Sarat, Paul [Kayted 00:07:09], Henry Steel Commager, one of the foremost constitutional historians in the history of our country was one of my professors. He gave me great insight one day, I'll never forget it. He said, "Hey, don't speak with your hands." You know, gems like that formed part of my education. So listen, that's who I am. I've always been just by nature of my birth and by my upbringing interested and involved in understanding what the political sphere is that's happening around me. While at Amherst, we were students looking for a cause, and... Sorry, the turtles are over there rebelling.

Jeffrey: [00:07:58](#) But while at Amherst we students were looking for a cause and are big push and affective push was around divestment of the school's endowment from businesses associated with apartheid South Africa. So it's always been an interest for me. When I started acting well, what I discovered was the stories that I was most drawn to were stories that had a relevance to our politics, to our country, to issues. Those are the things that compelled me when I read them. So the first film that I did, for example, was a mini series called Separate but Equal, in which Sidney Poitier played Thurgood Marshall. It was Burt Lancaster's last film, he played the council that argued opposite Marshall. I forget his name, it'll come to me. But I got the role, or at least I got invited to audition because I had a political science degree. So they [inaudible 00:09:08], "Yeah, get that guy in here."

Jeffrey: [00:09:11](#) And then Angels America, which is really kind of the epicenter of my artistic life, in many ways reshaped me as a human being, was a piece infused with urgent political concern, with moral outrage, but done with meticulous artistic beauty and craftsmanship and the architecture of the storytelling it's just singular. So that early on in my career convinced me even more that it was possible or even necessary to infuse these things into my creative life. And so I was spoiled early and I've tried when I can to be unabashedly political in my creative expression when I can.

Paul: [00:10:06](#) I think I've been-

Jeffrey: [00:10:07](#) No apologizing for it, bro.

Paul: [00:10:09](#) No, I'm glad you don't. I mean I've been grateful for it and it's been an inspiration to me and others, I think, who are activists and who are advocates to know you're out there fighting the good fight and supporting so many others who do. I got to-

Jeffrey: [00:10:25](#) Well, I hope I'm relatively informed.

Paul: [00:10:27](#) You are. I think that's the other part, you know, I don't want to-- Yeah, I wouldn't want to tangle with you on Twitter or on the debate stage. I mean, you're effective and you have incredible reach now, right? Your reach continues to grow with Westworld and now with Batman and with the Bond films and everything else. But I want to take a couple steps back. Number one, I can't let the turtles go. What the hell is going on with the turtles in your room? I can't see it. It's off screen. If folks are listening, they can tune into the video later and see the really cool wall of stuff behind you that I think includes... I think I can see your Tony on the wall over one shoulder.

Jeffrey: [00:11:06](#) Ah that's...

Paul: [00:11:06](#) I saw was it a Golden Globe or another award behind you in the back?

Jeffrey: [00:11:10](#) Yeah, it's... Yeah, well it won't fit up on the top. I try to at least stuff it up on the top somewhere, that one won't fit. Yeah.

Paul: [00:11:20](#) And noisy turtles. So what is ...

Jeffrey: [00:11:22](#) Well they're less noisy now because I turned off their filter in their basking area. Maybe I'll show them to you later and now they're like the dude is chewing on the water spout and all kinds of stuff going on. But those are my guys, man, a male and a female, two red eared sliders that came home with my kids and their mom, my ex wife Carmen, at the time, from Canal Street, in a brown paper bag or something. They had these two quarter sized turtles that are now plate sized and as a part of the separation, the turtles came with me. Because I tend to look after them.

Paul: [00:12:06](#) That's like the real like Ninja Turtle story basically. I can't let you get away without telling us the names. What are the names of the turtles?

Jeffrey: [00:12:15](#) The male is... Well the female is Mouse and the male is Nancy Nippleton, of course.

Paul: [00:12:21](#) Of course.

Jeffrey: [00:12:23](#) My daughter named them. At that time we didn't realize which was which gender, so there they are.

Paul: [00:12:31](#) This is the beauty of coronavirus media where we can actually be in your home hearing about your turtles. We hear the alerts coming in that are probably your family members saying, "Where the hell are you?" But let me stay on a piece that I ask of everybody, Jeffrey. Every guest we have is an iconic, important and inspiring American. You hit all three. But you're a man of great taste, of great experience, of great wisdom. What is your drink of choice? We can't have a drink in person today, but what is your drink of choice, your adult beverage of choice?

Jeffrey: [00:13:06](#) That's an easy one. It's going to be so somewhat self-serving because I'm an also an investor in this company, this brand Uncle Nearest Premium Tennessee Whiskey. It is the most awarded Tennessee whiskey of the last three years. It's a new, relatively new, bottle. One of those fastest, if not the fastest, growing independent label in the business and it is a bottle that is named in honor of a man named Nearest Green. And not only is it a fantastic tasting whiskey, it is far and away the best story in whiskey.

Jeffrey: [00:13:48](#) Nearest Green was the man who when enslaved and working on a farm in Lynchburg, Tennessee, took on a young boy and taught them to make whiskey because he was managing a whiskey operation on a farm there. This young boy came to work with Nearest when he was 13. Nearest mentored him, taught him everything he knew about making whiskey. That young boy's name was Jack Daniel. And Nearest Green was the man who mastered the process that differentiates Tennessee whiskey from bourbon. It's a charcoal mellowing process, which is known as the Lincoln County process and Lincoln County, Tennessee. Nearest Green, a man whose services were purchased, who was rented from a company called Landis, the Landis Group or something like that in Tennessee, was brought to this farm as a slave to man the whiskey operations and taught Jack Daniel everything he knew. Jack Daniel ended up buying the whiskey operation from this farmer, from this preacher farmer named Dan Call after The Civil War and he moved his operation up the road a little bit where the Jack Daniel distillery sits now and Nathan Nearest Green was his first master distiller. And so this bottle, long story, how it came to pass.

Jeffrey: [00:15:33](#) There was an article in the New York Times, I think in 2016 Brown-Forman, the company that owns Jack Daniel's starting to tell the real history, as opposed to the story that, "Oh Jack Daniel learned to make whiskey from this preacher, Dan Call, this white preacher farmer and the rest is history." No, that wasn't the story at all. And so I read this article about Nathan Nearest Green and the actual history. Likewise a woman named Fawn Weaver who was in Singapore at the time read the article. I got fired up about it. I clipped this picture out of this amazing set of pictures there. I would tell every bartender that I came across about this story. It was one or two, over the course of a year that I would come across bartenders that is.

Jeffrey: [00:16:18](#) Anyway, I just fell in love with this story and she did as well. But she got so fired up and so angry that a few weeks later she headed to Lynchburg, Tennessee to start to research. She researched so deeply that she learned more about the history of Jack Daniel than the company itself. In fact, she interviewed the son of the biographer of Jack Daniel, and at the end of the interview she said, "Oh, by the way, who owns the rights to this book?" He said, "Oh, I think Jack Daniel's company owns it." So she went and discovered they in fact did not. So she purchased the rights to Jack Daniel's biography. So if you go to the the gift shop, Jack Daniels Distillery, and you buy his biography, you're buying it now from our company.

Jeffrey: [00:17:08](#) She set up this company after doing all of this research, created this bottle, the recipe came from a descendant of Jack Daniel's by marriage. Our first whiskey operations master is a woman named Sherry Moore, who's a descendant of Jack Daniel's by marriage. There are members of both families, the Green family and Jack Daniel's family that have come together to put this company together. There's some proceeds from the sales that go to a scholarship fund for descendants of Nearest Green because some of these folks were still working as common laborers at the Jack Daniels Distillery, even though it was their ancestor who mastered the product that has become this iconic brand, multi-billion dollar global brand.

Jeffrey: [00:18:05](#) And so I reached out to Fawn, I owe my relationship, my investment in it to her. I reached out to her, I said, "I love this story." When I found out that this bottle had come into being, I said, "I'd love to help you tell this story and if you need a couple of bucks more I'll do that too because I think you've really got something going here." And so Uncle Nearest. Get a little taste of that and a little taste of that history too. And right now we could all use a little Uncle Nearest. No man, I don't think spirit sales are suffering right now as long as you can get them online.

Paul: [00:18:46](#) No. They're up I think hundreds of percentage points. Jeffrey that is the most fascinating and enlightening answer we've ever had to that question in the history of this show and-

Jeffrey: [00:19:00](#) Spirits hit me, man. You can go to UncleNearest.com to order it and you can also see a couple of short films that we did. One that we shot on the original farm where Old No. 7 still was situated. And there's a visitor center too. We were in the process of building out the entire operation because we were farming out the distillation and bottling and now that's all going to be in house. But if you go, it's such a beautiful part of the country. And the farm, which Fawn bought as well, where this original still was situated, is gorgeous and you can see the stream whose water was used to make the whiskey. There are still old rusted pipes from the original still running out and just across from that stream are the rock stone foundations of some of the old structures that were there. Slave houses, many of them. It's an encapsulation of the American story in such an incredible way. If you go visit, it's really very moving.

Jeffrey: [00:20:14](#) But Jack Daniel, the company, Jack Daniel's the company, Brown-Forman, didn't even know that that's where Old No. 7 is situated, this original farm. So Fawn bought that too. She bought the farm in the best way.

Paul: [00:20:26](#) Wow.

Jeffrey: [00:20:27](#) Now the thing that the thing is about... Wonderful little tale, the story, Old No. 7 on the bottle, right?

Paul: [00:20:37](#) Yeah.

Jeffrey: [00:20:38](#) Old No. 7 refers to, she thinks, according to her research, the number of the still where the whiskey was made. But they redrew the district lines and they read numbered all of the stills. And so what had been the number seven still Jack Daniels and Nathan Green's still became number 16.

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Jeffrey: [00:21:03](#) It was Nathan Green still became number 16 but everybody wanted the whiskey from Old No.7. So, that's where that came from on the bottle, on that square bottle.

Paul: [00:21:10](#) Wow.

Jeffrey: [00:21:10](#) Yeah, it's cool stuff.

Paul: [00:21:12](#) Thank you for sharing that.

Jeffrey: [00:21:14](#) You are welcome.

Paul: [00:21:15](#) This is a theme of the show. You may not know this, but we end each show with a presentation of an American whiskey. And we talk a lot about whiskey, we've talked a lot about bourbon, we've talked a lot about all of it. So, folks who are listening are going to drink that up. They're going to love that story. And I think if there's another pandemic that sounds like the place that we need to be to hide out for a while.

Jeffrey: [00:21:38](#) Yeah. Holed up right there.

Paul: [00:21:39](#) Yeah. And it also, it shows me too, all the different layers of how you're so involved in the history, and the activism, and the business and the storytelling of this country. It's one of the reasons why I was so excited to have you on the show, but I want to ask you to go back into the way, way back machine, back into D. C. or wherever it was and tell us an answer to a question I ask of all our guests as well, which is Jeffrey Wright, what was your first car?

Jeffrey: [00:22:10](#) My first car was, I believe I was a sophomore in college. I think it was the summer of my sophomore year. I worked in D.C. for the Washington Gas Company. Summer gig, and maybe it's after my freshman year, on of the best gigs I've ever had in my life, man, I was toting a jackhammer. I was shoveling holes all damn day. Where these other guys would go down and they would fix these big gas mains. I was a member of the International Union of Gas Workers. I was making more money than I ever made in my life. Triple time on Sundays, 21 hour, we were down there doing it and I was a brick at the end of the summer. And I had a good amount of cash in my pocket. And so I went onto The Washington Post and I found a used 1972 BMW 2002, that I think I bought for like 1,200 bucks.

Jeffrey: [00:23:15](#) And I had an uncle, my mom's sister down in Tidewater, Virginia, who was a body and fender man. And he was masterful. That guy, they called him the resurrector. He could just bring a car back from the dead, man. So, I drove down there and he ... Beautiful, beautiful little ride. And I had adored these cars. I'd seen them all. So, he tightened it up, I think that was like 1980, what was that, '84 or '85. So, it was a 12 year old car at that time. But he just put a job on that thing, man. So, I drove back up to Amherst and about two months after I got to Amherst, that fall, I damn near totaled the thing.



Paul: [00:24:08](#) How did you near total it? And I got to ask you too, what color is this car? Because [crosstalk 00:24:16].

Jeffrey: [00:24:15](#) It was a blue, it was a little bit of an electric blue, man, sunroof. I had a stereo that I'd popped into it. It was was cranking. And I was tweaking the carburetor one day outside our house where we lived and one of my friends came out and I said, "Russell ..." Well, I said, "Let's go for a ride, man." He said, because I had to do a little carburetor, [inaudible 00:00:24:42]. He said, "We're going to do some speed?" I said, "Yeah, man, let's go." It's like about three o'clock in the afternoon, school's just getting out, the local, and we're just flying, man, up these little narrow New England roads.

Jeffrey: [00:24:57](#) And I came to this turn that I did not quite judge as I might have and I fishtailed to the left. I'll never forget it, brought it back, swung it back, and the back, right quarter panel came just slamming into a pickup truck that was coming in the opposite direction. A New England gentleman who had been picking up his kids from school and he said, I'll never forget. He said, "Going a little fast. Weren't you fellas?" That was pretty much the end of the glory days of that ride, although it continued to function, she was never quite the same. Yeah. Yeah.

Paul: [00:25:39](#) Man. Every answer you have just keeps getting better, man. This is gold, man. I had a vision of you coming out of D.C. jacked up from working all summer, in this cool car, playing lacrosse. People may not know that you were a lacrosse player, right? In addition into ... What did you play on lacrosse team?

Jeffrey: [00:26:04](#) What's that?

Paul: [00:26:04](#) What position did you play on the lacrosse team?

Jeffrey: [00:26:05](#) I was attack, but that's a long story too. I was leading scorer freshmen sophomore year, even though I had been a goalie in high school. That's another long story. But I played extra man, long story, offense in high school. Long story why the sophomore goalie beat me out that freshman year. But anyway, two games into the season, they put me at attack. Had a great friend of mine named Fox Smith, he used to feed me and I would score. So, I was leading scorer first two years until I started acting, at which point I became ... Fox and another guy named Pete Dealey were all American senior year, and they look at me like, dude, what happened to you? And I was like the theater knucklehead. But I did it played lacrosse and you played football, of course.

Paul: [00:26:53](#) Yeah. Yeah, You've been kind of on the attack ever since in different ways, and I wanted to make sure we get into this moment that we're in, right? And part of what I believe, Jeffrey, is I think it's a global war, right? Against this common enemy to kind of frame it up, but there's still a feeling in my heart that some people are in it. Some people really feel it and recognize the stakes and the seriousness of it, and some who don't, right? There's kind of two camps here. The camp that know we're at war and the camp who don't. And you're right next to a hospital. As we're talking, we're on Zoom, so apologies and thanks to everyone for bearing with the technical challenges. But there are sirens going by your house constantly, right?

Paul: [00:27:39](#) They've been going by my house constantly for weeks. I've been stopping interviews to do it. And you're in a very high impact zone and you've got a 90 year old aunt in your house, right? So, can you break down, given your understanding of history and your activism, and just your wealth of perspective, what do you make of this moment and the stakes that we're in? And just break it down in whatever way you're comfortable, the political dynamics that are in play.

Jeffrey: [00:28:10](#) Well, so you don't want to hear any more about my former lacrosse glory days? Right?

Paul: [00:28:15](#) I do. I mean, I could talk about that all day.

Jeffrey: [00:28:17](#) Don't worry I got it bro. I can't do that stuff anymore. Anyway.

Paul: [00:28:20](#) I could talk about that all day long, man. But we'll go on, this will turn into the Rogan podcast. It'll be over three hours.

Jeffrey: [00:28:26](#) Oh, boy. We don't want to do that. Let's stay right here, baby. And so, I think one of the things that we are suffering from right now are the results of the last few years of misinformation, of deceptive messaging from Trump, from The White House, an absence of veracity, an absence of clear fact-based messaging. Because that right now is the answer to public safety. That's the first step, right? Is understanding what we're facing and what we do about it. We're not getting that from the executive level of the Federal Government and I mean, that approach is criminal to me. This is a situation that doesn't read the propaganda, that doesn't hear it. The COVID, just biologically incapable of buying into that shit, right? So, it's going to do what it's going to do regardless.

Jeffrey: [00:29:42](#) I, for number of reasons, became pretty deeply involved in the Ebola situation back in 2014, 2015. I had been involved in some work in Sierra Leone for about a decade. That was my focus more so even than acting at the time. We happen to work very closely with a community of about 15,000 people on some economic development opportunities around natural resources, both mineral and agricultural. Long story how I got involved in this, but again, it was tied to my educational background and my interests. And I had an opportunity to visit during the war in Sierra Leone with a guy who worked as security on a film called Ali that we shot in Mozambique. He happened to former SAS guy, bad-ass. He was of the First Fijian Regiment of the SAS. We became close very quickly. We worked together over a month and a half. He took me to Sierra Leone because I'd been studying the war for a number of reasons.

Jeffrey: [00:30:52](#) I said, "Fred, where do you live?" His name was Fred Marafono. He passed away a few years ago, he said, "Oh, Sierra Leon." I said, "Wait, Sierra Leone? What are you doing in Sierra Leone?" So, I said, "How long you been there?" He said, "Oh, '94." I said, "What? '94?" I'm going, "What? The war kicked off." And I'm going, "What?" And then I went, oh, security, Sierra Leone, '94. Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding. This guy was freelance, but it was more complicated than that. He had been in Sierra Leone to set up a security operation at a gold exploration site and ended up staying during the war and working with the government to try to quell this rebellion. Anyway, I ended up going with him, the first time I've been in a war zone, because he wanted me to come and see with my own eyes what was happening.

Jeffrey: [00:31:41](#) So, I said, I called my Carmen, she was pregnant at the time. I said, "Hey, this guy wants to take me to Sierra Leone." And she said, "Well, you got to go. It's all you ever talk about." So, I ended up going with him, seeing from a kind of ground truth thing. It was a ceasefire at the time. I'd never seen so many guns in my life though, 17,000 UN troops in country at the time. I stayed there for four days just to bear witness to what was happening, again for a number of reasons that will take too long to explain, and I left. I ended up starting some projects there trying to help with the rebuilding, to the extent that I could, of that country. You ended up working with this community, 15,000 people on the Guinea border, northeast corner of the country, 40 miles from patient zero, just over in Guinea.

Jeffrey: [00:32:28](#) So, in late spring 2014 I started reading about these reports of the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, reached out to the local chiefdom leadership, paramount chief, guy named Jabila. I said, "Hey, man, you've got to keep an eye out for this thing." "Oh, it's not

[inaudible 00:32:49]." "Oh, bro, just keep an eye out." Sure enough it crossed the border and I'd reached out to the WHO to understand what the needs were. They said, "Okay, you need PPEs, you need bleach, you need washing stations." Stuff like that. We had been working on some agricultural projects with cow farmers, training them up, this is purely social development. We were doing commercial development on one side and social investment on the other. And so, this was working with the cow farmers, training them up to fair trade standards, working women's vegetable co-op, training them up.

Jeffrey:

[00:33:23](#)

So, we diverted \$10,000 away from that, toward helping the chiefdom prepare itself for this outbreak, which they did. Setting up washing stations, they put up a border patrol, all of these things. They lost one person throughout that outbreak. One person, a doctor who had been outside the chiefdom in a nearby town, came back, was infected. He knew what he had, he self-isolated. There was a nurse who looked after him and unfortunately he perished, but no one else did. And this is a community with relatively nothing, zero in healthcare infrastructure. The reach of the healthcare system there, as fragile as it was, was tenuous at best in this area, right? But nonetheless, with early intervention and organization, they were able to stave this thing off. So, I became involved, for that reason, in trying to spread the message around what was happening during Ebola because I was just one of the few Americans who had spent been a lot of time directly in that area and in that region.

Jeffrey:

[00:34:29](#)

And I knew that Americans were not as susceptible to that virus as we thought we were. We weren't, because what we didn't appreciate was that people died more so, yes, because the virus was ferocious and the fatality rate was high, but more so because people lack access to health care, to intensive care and even quality care. So, that's why folks were dying in such great numbers. Right? They were way out there in the bush, man, it took us 12 hours to get there by road and it's only like 120 kilometers. Really isolated areas. I visited hospitals because we had help set up birthing stations for women in our communities, so things like that. Little small healthcare initiatives that we could take on that would be impactful. And so I'd visited hospitals there.

Jeffrey:

[00:35:21](#)

There was a government hospital that served 500,000 people in that area, the operating room lights were powered by a car battery, right? So, that's the type of protection these folks had against that thing. We were all freaked out. But over here, relax, you've got a health care system. This thing doesn't transmit so

easily, you've got to be intimate with someone's secretions, excretions. So, we were way off the mark and I think in some ways it might've, because of the end result was very positive for us in the United States in terms of cases, I think it might've lulled us into a little bit of a complacency about this, right? But this is a very different situation. This virus spreads much easily, much, much more easily. It's not nearly as virulent, as we're coming to understand it. And again, I'm not an expert, I'm just interpreting what I get, but this was a very different situation, right?

Jeffrey: [00:36:22](#) So, as well, when you started to look at what was happening in Wuhan back in January, you heard a couple of news stories. Oh, hmm. But because of my experience with the Ebola thing, I had a chance to meet Tony Fauci at one point, Larry Brilliant at one point, who was at the WHO and a part of the team responsible for the eradication of smallpox. I knew where to go for information. And at one point I had been asked to narrate a documentary back in 2016, 2017 called An Unseen Enemy, that aired on CNN, in which they talk at length about the possibility of a coming pandemic. And they explain what possible scenarios could be, whether it was a wet market in Asia where a zoonic virus was born, or whether it skips from animal to human or any number of possibilities, industrial animal husbandry here in our country that is potentially dangerous.

Jeffrey: [00:37:22](#) Of course, now there are reports that perhaps it leaked from labs studying it, but nonetheless we don't know. But what we do know, that is documented, is that scientists have been talking about this for years as a possibility. Right? So, when I heard Wuhan, I went, ooh, oh, okay. Kind of kept my eye on it. And then one day, I think it may have been after the first case, or no, it was prior to the first case in the States. I remember one day I said, "Oh, let me just a Google Wuhan. Where is this town?" And then I realized, no, it's not a town at all. It's a city of 11 million people and a transportation hub inclusive of international flights to the United States. And this is a virus that, as far as we knew their past, more or less like a common cold, red flags on fucking fire, bro.

Jeffrey: [00:38:12](#) This was mid-January and anybody who saw that who's in a leadership position at the Federal Government should have been wide awake to this possibility, and the steps that ... When I came back from Sierra Leone in 2015, after going over there just to check in, the outbreak was subsiding. But nonetheless, when I came back I got calls every day from the CDC, "What's your temperature? How are feeling." I was taken aside when I entered customs, temperature, questionnaire, the whole thing,

they were monitoring me for the next, I think it was 21 days. There was a system in place to test, to some extent, to monitor and trace, right? Boom. That's exactly what should've been happening immediately after that first case. You're talking about banning travel.

Jeffrey: [00:39:19](#) Yeah. Okay, great. But you had 300,000 people in the month of January that came in from China, right? And you didn't ban travel, you fucking idiot, for everyone coming back. It was just for those with a Chinese passport, as though this virus was checking people's passport credentials, right? I mean, it's just, it's just grounded in pure self-aggrandizing, self-fulfilling fantasy. And it has no place in proactive, meaningful political leadership because it's entirely ineffectual, and it's a damn show man. It's putting on, I don't even ... Thankfully I'm too involved now to watch the TV and watch the briefings and stuff. But this is some farcical, ridiculous show that's continuing to be put on while people are dying. And I am able to tamp down my anger by getting involved at the local level with my community to some extent.

Jeffrey: [00:40:27](#) And that is saving me, saving my head from exploding with outrage, frustration and a serious sense of pissed-offedness at this nonsense that we are having to face in the midst of an historic crisis in our country, that none of us has ever seen.

Paul: [00:40:49](#) So, I usually ask guests, what makes you angry? I think I got that. I think I got it.

Jeffrey: [00:40:56](#) Yeah. Bro, as you say, I got my 90 year old aunt sitting downstairs right now. She's glued to the TV, herself, in between playing Scrabble and doing her puzzles and she's wondering, she's a former nurse, where are these antigen and antibody tests? You know what I mean? I mean, we all are.

Jeffrey: [00:41:17](#) I can name ... There are four guys working at a couple of the restaurants over here in our neighborhood. Gone. There was a guy who worked in a deli over here, there was a guy who worked at one of the restaurants, there was a bouncer who worked at one of the bars over here. They checked out, man. They moved on. There was a guy who's got a diner over here, his mother, gone. There's another guy at a restaurant, one of the first places I'd like to eat when I come back, they do this Nashville hot chicken. When I come back to town from working, I'm like, man I got to get that chicken. A young guy, man, he's just coming out of it induced coma. He had a a temperature of 106.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:42:04]

Jeffrey: [00:41:17](#)

Paul: [00:42:10](#)

Yeah. And I think that's what I've been trying to sound the alarm about, and I know other folks have as well. I mean, it's easy to feel like, if we want to use a 9/11 comparison, it kind of feels like parts of America are like Iraq and Afghanistan, and the rest of folks are marginally inconvenienced. Some places, it's getting increasingly inconvenienced, right? But if you're in New York, if you're in Seattle, if you're increasingly in New Orleans, Detroit, DC, other cities, now you're losing people around you. Right? Now it's shifted into a new phase. And I remember talking to folks during the AIDS movement which...

Jeffrey: [00:42:46](#)

We were, but we were marginally inconvenienced at one point, too.

Paul: [00:42:49](#)

Right, right, right. And now, it's spreading in a way that I still feel like there are some of us that are deep in the fight that are losing friends all around us, and other folks are still watching it on TV. But the difference here is this one is going to come across, right? This is not George Bush saying, "Hey, the terrorists are going to come blow up your mall in Topeka, Kansas." This is a real thing that's coming into your supermarkets. It's coming in to the nursing homes, and we're seeing that all across the country. So over the last month and a half on this show especially, I've been trying to bring people perspective and information and insight from the front lines.

Paul: [00:43:24](#)

And I think most folks who maybe clicked on this podcast didn't know how close to this you are. And I'm glad you got in to the Ebola experience, because I wanted you to talk about that. But you've also shifted it into action. You're mobilizing and organizing your community in a really powerful way. Turning that anger into positive impacts. So can you talk about Brooklyn For Life and what you're actually doing to organize people in Fort Green and throughout Brooklyn right now?

Jeffrey: [00:43:49](#)

Yeah, sure. I'll tell you the facts as they are, they started off pretty simply. I was just trying to help out a couple buddies of mine whose food I like to eat, man. Michael Thompson, his spot Brooklyn Moon has been in this community for 25 years. I've lived here for 20 years. We don't play so much more anymore, but I used to go there. We'd play chess, man. There was a chess crew that came in there. We drank our whiskey or whatever. We played chess and grabbed some jerk wings. And he's an institution here. Vito Randazzo owns a place called Graziella's,

just up the road, four blocks up. Great pizza. He's been there for 15 years. My kids and I order his pizza. I'm a regular.

Jeffrey: [00:44:35](#) His lasagna, oh my God. You want him there. When this is all done, I want that lasagna there. I want that goat cheese salad, that calamari there. Okay? I want Mike there. I want to go in for some jerk wings and whiskey over there, you know? So there was selfish intent behind this. And I was like, "Hey guys." It started with Mike. He's not a delivery oriented space. When I was in London, I said, "Michael, man, we're going to go on lockdown. I know it's coming. So you better be prepared and maybe reorganize yourself to delivery mode, so that you can stay afloat through this." So I told him, "I'll help you boost it on social media, that you have."

Jeffrey: [00:45:21](#) And so I got back here, I think it was March 15th, I got back. Shortly thereafter we went on lockdown. Mike had done what he could to adjust. And I called him next day. I said, "Hey Mike, man." I said, "How you doing?" He said, "Bro, I've had five orders today, man." I'm like, "Oh, wow, okay, that's not sustainable." You know?

Jeffrey: [00:45:42](#) So then someone shortly thereafter pinged me that on social media that Vito had been delivering pizzas to the hospital. He had customers call in to buy pizzas on behalf of Brooklyn Hospital staff. And I thought, Michael and I were thinking about other means for helping his business. And I thought about the hospital. What I assumed the cafeteria was up and running, and they didn't need the help. But Vito put me in touch with a guy named Lenny Singletary over there, who's this incredible soldier in this thing. He is External Affairs VP for the hospital.

Jeffrey: [00:46:21](#) Got in touch with him. Vito and I went down to meet with him. We chatted six feet apart, masks on outside the hospital. He said, "Actually, we could use the augmentation of our cafeteria because we got people working 15, 16 hour days. They're not going home. They're staying in hotels near the hospital. There's nothing to eat late at night. So if you could help us, that'd be great.

Jeffrey: [00:46:42](#) So that was March 27th we began. I think March 25th I started the GoFundMe page, and it was really oriented toward these two restaurants, Graziellas and Brooklyn Moon, delivering 200 meals per day to Brooklyn Hospital. And so we of course started thinking about other restaurants. I was like, man, I really love that fried chicken at Peaches, you know? I want that to be there.



Jeffrey: [00:47:07](#) And they were friends of mine as well. This is one of the gentleman, this is the guy. There are two partners. One, Craig, is emerging from his coma right now as a result of COVID. So I reached out, and that's when I heard from his partner, Ben Grossman, that that was going on. So anyway, they started to reach out to their circle. We pulled in more restaurants. We needed to increase the demands. So we reached out to additional hospitals. Lenny put us in touch. The Brooklyn borough president, Eric Adams's office reached out and said, "Hey, I hear what you're doing. We love this. Would we want to expand it Brooklyn wide, and we'll support you in doing that." They've been incredible.

Jeffrey: [00:47:44](#) So now we have 38 partner restaurants throughout Brooklyn. We're delivering on an average over 2500 meals per day. We've got six medical facilities in Brooklyn. We've got one in lower Manhattan, New York Presbyterian, that we're serving. They snuck in there, because everybody wants to be in Brooklyn, you know? So we're serving them-

Paul: [00:48:05](#) Yeah. That's my neighborhood. That's where my kid was born.

Jeffrey: [00:48:08](#) Oh, wow. So we've got seven medical facilities, and we've got all 10 EMS stations in Brooklyn. And that has been with the help of VP for EMS Officer's Union, Anthony Almojera, who has been just man,... I mean, these guys, he's been incredible in helping us make the outreach, but also he's been wonderfully supportive in the midst of everything he's going through. He's been kind of giving me insight as to what the paramedics and EMTs are going through. And man, that ain't a story that's going away anytime soon, because what they're seeing, you talked about 9/11. One of the hospital reps described this. What we're going through now is 9/11 in slow motion. And what Anthony told me was that they're receiving, this was a couple of weeks ago, they were receiving more calls daily than they received on 9/11. 9/11 was the record.

Jeffrey: [00:49:09](#) 6500 calls per day. They were hitting 7200 calls. 6500 calls every day. And of course on 9/11, sadly, a lot of those calls didn't involve patients, ultimately. These calls involved involve a patient every day. And what they're facing is a lot of situations for the paramedics in which, as he describes to me, they show up and they're unable to do anything. And so he's telling me, "Man, I had 12 cardiac arrests today. And there was nothing that could be done. We can't take them in. It's too late." And this is COVID related, and they're seeing things that is really putting the grind on their psyches. And this is a story that needs to be followed going forward, like the story of your colleagues

coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a story I think that's going to need to be followed in terms of the moral injury for these folks going forward as well as those who are being affected by this thing. So that's what Brooklyn For Life is, man.

- Paul: [00:50:11](#) Yeah. I mean, it's leadership, man. It's so inspiring to see this grow. And my best friend lives in Fort Green. I have a lot of friends that live in your neighborhood, and they know that we're in touch, and they see us interact at events and on Twitter. And they said, "Man, your friend Jeffrey's doing awesome out here. Let him know how much we appreciate it." We've had Rob Serra on the show, who's been talking about the need for first responders and firefighters and cops and EMTs, and they continue to be underserved and under resourced. So I mean, there's a parallel here. I mean, it's our firefighters. It's our doctors. It's now our active duty troops. It's veterans dying in nursing homes. It's all of these folks that we're asking to be frontline fighters against the virus. And they're walking in with no body armor and no ammunition. And if they don't get back up from someone like you, they're stranded. So I think you're making a huge impact on the ground.
- Jeffrey: [00:51:00](#) Whoa, hold on.
- Paul: [00:51:01](#) Yeah?
- Jeffrey: [00:51:02](#) I appreciate that, but this is a grassroots thing, and I'm the guy up front, but these restaurant owners and these restaurant workers are busting ass, man.
- Paul: [00:51:10](#) I love that.
- Jeffrey: [00:51:11](#) And they are feeling, they're amped up about this. They're feeling engaged. They're feeling purposeful. And for example, I called Interfaith Hospital in Bed-Stuy. They have a cafeteria that's run by a private company, forgive me, farmed out, and the company reduced operations so that they were only providing meals for patients. So I called up this beautiful woman, she herself had just gotten out of ICU with something unrelated, but she works as an administrator over there. And I said, "Hey, I'm just Jeffrey Wright. We've just started this thing. Just wanted to see if you guys are okay for meals."
- Jeffrey: [00:51:59](#) She said, "What?" She said, "I need 600 meals a day." You know? And so she told me that they were no longer providing meals, the facility, it was no longer providing meals to the staff. And everything's closed. And we're asking them to do this

heroic work with no fuel. So it's these restaurant owners. I think the wonderful thing about it is there's a need on both sides. There's a critical need at the frontline for basic sustenance. The restaurant owners need revenues to stay afloat, keep their some employees. They're not maybe not fully staffed but at least keep few folks working and paid.

Jeffrey: [00:52:51](#) And also we're taking donations. But in some ways, it's not a charity, right? We're 501(c)(3), not for profit tax deductible donation now, but everybody who is donating, who lives in this community, needs to do this for their own wellbeing. They need to look out for those folks at those hospitals, because if they go down, hell's breaking out. And we're all going to suffer. So this is about the whole community. The whole structure of this thing is everybody looking out for one another, and at the same time looking out for themselves. So a little bit of-

Paul: [00:53:32](#) Yeah, that's leadership. We talk a lot about the importance of humility and leadership on this show, and I think that's what is a constant for you. But it is an important thing that's happening, where you've got the borough president, and you've got people in the hospitals, and we've got you and the restaurant owners. And there's an alchemy here that has to happen that's at the heart of community organizing and at the heart of responding to any kind of an immediate threat of this magnitude. And if you are one or the catalyst and a part of that mix, I think it's what is so inspiring for me about this. But it's also a contrast, Jeffrey. So you are showing the kind of leadership. Those restaurant owners are showing the kind of leadership. At the same time, we've got the President on one side, and we've got in view, de Blasio also, who has been slow and has been uninformed and has been defensive. And I think...

Jeffrey: [00:54:20](#) Hasn't really stepped up to the moment, I have to say. Hasn't really been, unlike Cuomo. Cuomo looks like he was born for this, man. Everybody's dealing with the same data sets and information, and that's been changing day to day. We know only as much as we know or can know. So he's made some missteps along the way. But in terms of information, which is understandable, but as far as leadership, as far as his clarity of his voice, the compassion with which he has delivered information and directive, man. I mean, it looks like he was born, he came out of the womb reading the manual on this thing, man. It's been really comforting.

Paul: [00:55:06](#) Everybody's getting dealt a shitty hand of cards, and you've got to figure out how to play them. Right? And not just the tactics, but the spirit and the strategy. And you can now see who's got

the chops for this, and who doesn't. But also who's got the character for it, right?

- Jeffrey: [00:55:19](#) Yeah.
- Paul: [00:55:19](#) And I see a lot of parallels between the way de Blasio handles it and Trump does. And I've said oftentimes there's similarities to them, the way they come after the media, the way they don't take responsibility. It may be a reach for some people, but when you're close to it, I think you can see that there are parallels, that when the shit hits the fan, start to reveal themselves. But there's been a failure of leadership on so many different levels. I want to ask you, Jeffrey, number one, so now that Biden is the nominee, your thoughts? You've been very active in raising your voice about the process and criticizing, fairly, the President. What's your thoughts now on Biden in the landscape? And you personally, would you ever run for office locally in Brooklyn or at the city level? We'd love to see you as a mayor right now instead of de Blasio. But would you ever take that leap yourself, maybe later in your career at some other point in your life?
- Jeffrey: [00:56:11](#) I'm a creative guy, you know? I think there's a place for an infusion, as I described earlier, of politics and art. I like that role. I like applauding when folks, when the politicians do well, and I like throwing stones at the motorcade when they don't, you know? I like that role. I'm also, I don't know if my personality and ego and all that thing is suited for it. I like to have my alone time. Don't bother me, you know? And you got to be accountable all the time. So maybe that's a shortcoming for me in terms of that, but I think that you were asking about... Less about me. You were asking about the--
- Paul: [00:56:52](#) About Biden. Yeah. Now that Biden ...
- Jeffrey: [00:56:54](#) of course.
- Paul: [00:56:55](#) -record this today. On Wednesday I was with Warren, came out and supported him. Obama's now unleashed. I've often used another HBO show as a parallel. When I talk about Game of Thrones, now the tribes are coming together around their Jon Snow, and these dragons are coming online, right?
- Jeffrey: [00:57:11](#) The avengers. They're assembling.
- Paul: [00:57:13](#) Yeah, Obama's coming online, and Biden's coming online. Some of them are dragons, and some of them are giants, but they're all coming now around this central leader, who has been

designated as Biden. But what are your thoughts now on him and the future of this process and what we need? How do we as activists, and how are you as an activist, going to engage in this now that the ultimate battle has come? As another battlefield unfolds around us, is Biden versus Trump. What are your thoughts on where we are right now?

Jeffrey: [00:57:46](#) I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that Joe Biden is next president of the United States. I don't think we have any choice. If you're watching the show Westworld, you can see that we filmed in Singapore last summer. First time I'd been there. First time I'd been to the region, really, Southeast Asia. Closest I've been is Hawaii, to that region, you know? And so was there. Beautiful place, incredible architecture, futuristic and well ordered. But also it's a velvet totalitarian state, you know? You're not going to say everything you want to say over there. You're not going to create the type of art that we create over there, because freedom of expression has given birth to the stories we tell here, the music we play here. That's why the music we play here is heard all over the world.

Jeffrey: [00:58:39](#) That music that came from the South, from people emerging out of bondage and making lyrical beauty and expressions of hope through the blues that changed the way the world listened to music, because it resonated with the freedom that they aspire to. When they played rock and roll on the Berlin wall, it was homage to those black folks in the South, right, who created that music. And that was because even though we had problems here, we were still a country that was about freedom of expression first and foremost. And a society that bucked against authoritarianism every step along the way.

Jeffrey: [00:59:24](#) And when I went to Singapore, I went, oh, wow, man. Okay. You look at Singapore. You look at the Philippines, China. You look at Russia, Hungary. You look at Brazil. You go, oh man, there's dominoes tumbling here, right, toward authoritarianism. And these impulses are being lit all over the country, all over the world. And if they happen in our country, if we allow that to happen in the United States of America, who's showing up on D-Day, right? You know?

Paul: [00:59:55](#) Mm hmm. (affirmative).

Jeffrey: [00:59:57](#) It's the only thing. We're not perfect. We're flawed. But at least we give space. We give space for the idea of freedom, right? And sometimes we get a glimpse of it, and we actually realize a bit of real freedom too, you know? So if that dies, then we go. And this guy, Trump, because he's intellectually lazy. He's

narcissistic. He lacks curiosity. He's deeply, deeply pathetically insecure. He's allowed these impulses toward authoritarianism. And we've learned that there's a portion of our country that is susceptible and submissive to that, desirous of that. You see it reflected in the evangelical culture. You see all of these subsets of our society that are wary of their freedom.

Jeffrey: [01:00:58](#) Eric Fromm wrote some great essays on the authoritarian personality and who susceptible to it and the symbiotic relationship between the leader and the follower. And this desire to escape freedom and all of these things, you know? And you look at it and it maps out as to what's going on here. We have no fucking choice, man. And if you love yourself and you and you appreciate that you as an American, although we have problems, that you are defined more so than so many other places in this world, your ability to say what the fuck you want, at core.

Jeffrey: [01:01:44](#) You might take some hits, but that's a fundamental right here. If you recognize that, then you have no choice but to do everything you can put Joe Biden in the White House. And I understand he's not perfect, but if we do that, at the same time, Bernie Sanders is coming along with him. Last year, 2016, Bernie Sanders himself said, "The democratic platform is the most progressive that the party has ever drafted."

Paul: [01:02:17](#) That's true.

Jeffrey: [01:02:18](#) Right?

Paul: [01:02:18](#) Yeah. That's true.

Jeffrey: [01:02:19](#) And likewise this time. This is a big tent, and we have to be inclusive of a left leaning movement in our country right now, particularly among youth. And this outbreak has shown us that tense vulnerabilities that Bernie was trying to articulate around health care, the safety net and all of that. The key is how do we get there? We don't get there through catch phrases and a mantra. There are many ways to skin this, but his voice is a powerful one right now for me in terms of where we're going as we head toward November. He's not out of the picture. He just-

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Jeffrey: [01:03:03](#) ... and we're going to, as we head toward November. He's not out of the picture. He just came in and endorsed Biden, of course, Obama and Elizabeth Warren today. I mean, as I was

looking at those debates and as I'm reading platforms from each of these candidates, it's like, Oh come on. Can we synthesize all the best ideas? There's some great ideas here. They don't necessarily, all of them aren't housed in one individual candidate, but if we can synthesize all those best ideas and express them through one candidate, and not only will we have a powerful chance in November, we'll have a great agenda to push forward, and some great work to do, and some great outcomes to achieve. So, man, I mean, it's time to dust off, gird yourself, throw the ego out if you weren't Biden. Yeah. Okay. No man, listen. Hey, let's do this man, this goddammit. There's no way, not four seconds more of this, ah of this of constancy of leadership in Washington DC at the executive level, because it has consequences.

Jeffrey: [01:04:21](#) And there are people who died from this thing, from this COVID outbreak who did not have to die as a result of the leadership in Washington, DC. And if you don't see that now, if you don't care about that now, then you don't care about anything.

Paul: [01:04:34](#) Yes. Yes. I mean stakes has never been higher. And that's what I meant.

Jeffrey: [01:04:40](#) It's Angry Americans right? This is the Angry American show right Paul right now?

Paul: [01:04:43](#) That was just like, that was like a 10 minute commercial for this show right there, man. That what it's all about. And I'm so glad that you got a chance to run with it because one of the things I've always known about you in my knowing you is that I think folks maybe watch you in the parts you play and they think, man, he's a fantastic actor. And these are other people's words that maybe you're performing, but your words, your rhetoric, and your oration, and your understanding, and your vision, and just your rhythm, and your intensity is so powerful and important. I mean, it's --it's the way you break it down. Hold on, if I can, like the way you break it down is a way that, especially right now has a righteous anger to it.

Paul: [01:05:30](#) And when I talk about righteous, I talk about Angry Americans. It was everybody from George Washington to Harvey Milk was an Angry American. And I think people are not angry enough. And what you do, what you choose to do with that and the same way you play those cards as a politician is the key. And you are recognizing, I think identifying something that I've been trying to say. Look, the existential threat is Trump. The Coronavirus isn't even in my view as big of a threat as Trump

because there will be other things. We will beat the Coronavirus. We'll find a way.

Jeffrey: [01:05:59](#) There are two outbreaks. If we don't take out Trump, then he could fuck up the next thing. The next thing could be Korea. The next thing could be anything else that happens. So we've got to recognize that he is still, the primary mission is beating him.

Jeffrey: [01:06:13](#) And I'm an Independent. So many of us are not Democrats, or don't have a party, or Republicans. So now if we can finally align against the pandemic, and then use that as momentum to align against Trump and then look ahead to rebuild, that's where I think our minds need to be. And we got to pick ourselves up out of the immediate five meter target fight and recognize that this has such everlasting consequence. And I really do think it's the fight of our time. I mean, this is our world war, right, and we're truly interconnected.

Jeffrey: [01:06:42](#) I agree. And if you look at what Biden-

Paul: [01:06:44](#) Yeah, please.

Jeffrey: [01:06:46](#) I agree. And to your point, if you look at in terms of the next phase in the battle, if you look at what Biden said, he's talking about one term. He said, "I'm not running two terms." This is a bridge, right? Let's get it as a bridge out and a bridge toward, and let's use that. And his VP candidate is going to be a major, major decision, always is, but even more so now, because that could potentially be your next President should he have the good fortune of being elected. I like Elizabeth Warren, I have to tell you, because I think she is too, she represents a bridge between spaces on the spectrum. She's progressive, but she also speaks to the center, or at least the economic center in a way that says, "Listen, I just want to put you in check. Right? I don't want to destroy the economic system, but the economic system needs to work better for all." She recognizes that the engine is a powerful one, but the engine is not inclusive of all. So it's about major reforms and protections in a very specific way. I mean, I think the two of them together as a bridge, Joe Biden as a bridge toward a kind of a more progressive view, but a progressive view that's appreciative that we're all, we're out of one, many. There are many perspectives and many institutions that you may hate them, but they're still here. Wall Street may be destructive in some ways, but wall Street is not going anywhere anytime soon. You better figure out a way to incentivize Wall Street to do those progressive things that you want. Incentivize Wall Street to invest in communities like Brownsville, Brooklyn, right, so that Brownsville, Brooklyn kids



have economic opportunities that are going to lead them away from the destructive opportunities of incarceration, and toward more productive lives.

Jeffrey: [01:09:00](#) But Wall Street could play a role there. Wall Street doesn't have to be an enemy to that. [PR:Yeah] So anyway, I just, I like her a kind of pragmatism, and I also like the fact that we do need female, the female influence on our political highest level of political leadership. We've had 250 years of male mistakes. Hey, let's give a woman the right to do some great things and maybe have a few mistakes too. Come on man. It's absurd. It's ridiculous.

Paul: [01:09:34](#) But I think, you nailed something important about Biden as a bridge, or as a bandaid, or as the consoler in chief. We've gone through this terribly traumatic experience that is the Trump Presidency compounded by now the Coronavirus. We need someone to kind of to bring the temperature down and make people feel better, to be a unifier in a way that we're starting to see around Biden, in some ways, not even because of him, just because he has now become the leader who the process has chosen, and a recognition that he is the one that is going to be in the ring against Trump. But I think, I don't know where they're going to go on the VP cannon. I don't think there's ever been a more important VP choice. I will identify something that I think is really important to me--as I've said on this show. I'm glad Biden's in a basement. I'm glad he's in a basement. I'm glad he's not out shaking hands. I mean, as long as I've said this all along, the only thing that was going to stop Biden is if he dies or if he gets sick.

Paul: [01:10:27](#) And I said that before Coronavirus. That was going to be the way I saw it unfolding. And similarly, between Trump and Sanders and Nancy Pelosi, a lot of them are now increasingly vulnerable with the Coronavirus out there. So if Biden's going to be a basement for the next seven months, good. And he's got Obama, and Michelle, and Warren, and Buttigieg and so many other people that are dynamic, especially on a little box like this, I think it's a really exciting landscape of adversaries for Trump to have to face. But I want to ask you, Jeffrey, if I can, in this pandemic, people are connecting with you and your activism and your work, but a lot of them were also hunkered down watching shitloads of Westworld. Right? If Biden's down in the basement, he's probably watching Westworld. The whole world is watching Westworld right now.

Jeffrey: [01:11:15](#) That's cool.

Paul: [01:11:16](#) So can I ask you your thoughts on Westworld in this moment, right? Because there's going to be critics who pull it apart. We all have our fans. I'm a massive fan of the show. I think you're brilliant. I think the show is brilliant. But what are your thoughts on Westworld right now in this moment? For some people it's an escape. For some people, maybe it's a bit of a wake up call, but what are your thoughts on how Westworld is impacting, or you'd like to impact this moment in history?

Jeffrey: [01:11:46](#) Well, Westworld particularly this year looks a lot like our world. And it ... Hey buddy. Look, give me a sec. My son just bumped in.

Paul: [01:12:03](#) Go ahead.

Jeffrey: [01:12:05](#) Give me a sec 'lijah.

Paul: [01:12:08](#) I'm going to wrap up with your dad in a second.

Jeffrey: [01:12:09](#) So it's speaking to the ways in which we behave. It speaks to the drivers that inform our behavior, technology, the manipulation of technology, the manipulation of messaging, and things like that. So without giving too much away, I mean we're still exploring from a construct of futuristic construct, we're very much exploring the world we all inhabit right now. Now the ways in which it, this COVID has affected that, obviously yeah. We're all hunkered down, a lot of people are watching it, but I think there's an outbreak that has occurred prior to COVID. That outbreak involves technology and its misuse, misinformation, disinformation, the division that has been fomented by the technology and the abuse of the technology. You're on Twitter, I'm on Twitter. You see this like, "Holy." Who among us was able to forecast the ways in which the information age would mutate into the disinformation age, and a divisive, embittered age? And so that was one of those first viral outbreaks. Right?

Paul: [01:13:53](#) Yeah.

Jeffrey: [01:13:55](#) So the explorations, I think perhaps that we're on this year in the show are more relevant in their metaphors, than they might've been otherwise. But we all Jona Nolan Lisa Joy are some brilliant thinkers, and they're probing from a technological side and a social side. Jona is very close with Elon Musk, very good friends with him. He gets insight on AI from him and who do I talk to, and he talks to other and he himself was a program of Jona too. But Lisa, Lisa went to Harvard Law and was off doing other things at McKinsey and wherever else. And was like

"What? What world am I in?" And she started writing. These are really interesting thinkers, and really capable writers, and great too, great leaders, optimistic leaders. Big show, lot of money, lot of moving parts, complex stories.

Jeffrey: [01:15:01](#) But they rally everyone and we hit some bumps in the road, but I've never seen Jona not take a challenge or crisis, however small, relative to what we do and convert into an opportunity. He always looks at, "Okay, that's okay. What I'll do, I'm going to reshape it and we'll go that way with the story. I don't worry about it." And I'm always like, "Fuck. why did we do that but I'm like, No. Don't worry about it bro. I got it. We'll re and we'll move on." So, great leaders, man. And I hope everybody's digging, digging what we do because we dig it, and we love doing it together too. The show runners, those few writers, the directors, but also, people talk about, people have a perception of what we do. You were talking about, "Oh he says words somebody else writes."

Jeffrey: [01:15:50](#) Well, less so on this show and I rewrite some stuff too. But we're also, we're interpreters of language, right, actors. We interpret language, we interpret story, just like a musician who plays, the guys sitting over in Carnegie Hall or my very good friend who plays violin at the Met, he's interpreting that 340 year old music. We interpret this stuff, and we choose what we do because it speaks to us. But also what people don't understand about what we do is that when we make these thing, it's a collective of people that aren't just in front of the camera and in newspapers or whatever the heck it is. They're carpenters, they're electricians, they're grips, they're craftsmen of all types coming together to tell these stories.

Jeffrey: [01:16:38](#) And that's the best part of doing what we do for me is being a part of that circle. Right? And when the camera's on, they look at me, working class guys. I'm getting payed pretty well. They look at me and they go, "Okay, he's with us. All right, let's kill it. Let's kill it. Let's move that 65 toss, power trap. Let's move those. Matriculate the ball down the field boys." I love that. I shake hands with my key grip Mike Anderson, he looks me in the eye and the first thing in the morning and he knows we're going to roll. It's great ...

Paul: [01:17:08](#) You throw Marshawn Lynch in the mix too.

Jeffrey: [01:17:10](#) Hey, baby, beastmode -- put yourself in.

Paul: [01:17:13](#) I was not ready for that. When he came on, I lost my shit. I was like, "Holy shit. That's Marshawn Lynch." My wife was like,

"Who?" And I was like, "It's fucking Marshal Lynch." But it is spectacular. It's stunning. It's beautiful this season especially so visually, just awe inspiring. But it's also very important, and I know it's given people a lot of relief and connection. It gives folks something to connect on that's inspiring, that's thoughtful, but also can connect us in other ways. And I want to let you go. I know your son is coming in. I have one final question to ask you that I ask of all guests, which is Jeffrey Wright, what makes you happy? What makes you happy?

- Jeffrey: [01:17:54](#) Seeing my son right there, that makes me happy, man. Family makes me happy, and surfing in the ocean.
- Paul: [01:18:03](#) Surfing.
- Jeffrey: [01:18:06](#) Especially with my family. Yeah.
- Paul: [01:18:08](#) Excellent. Excellent. Well, the final thing we do is a presentation of the gifts. I can't do it to you physically, but I will normally present you with some Angry Americans gear that I will send to you. Okay. That's-
- Jeffrey: [01:18:19](#) Cool.
- Paul: [01:18:19](#) It's coming your way. American made by veterans in the United States. I will also-
- Jeffrey: [01:18:23](#) Great.
- Paul: [01:18:24](#) ... send you a bottle of whiskey, and I have to carefully select the right bottle for you. Now you have your own whiskey company that's going to be tough, but I'm going to find one for you.
- Jeffrey: [01:18:34](#) I'll send one to you too.
- Paul: [01:18:36](#) And I normally have three kinds of Peeps. I ran out of my Peeps stash, but Easter just came up. It was a tradition on the show. And I ask all guests, if you had blue, yellow, or pink Peeps, which color would you choose Jeffrey Wright and why?
- Jeffrey: [01:18:50](#) Yeah, I got to go yellow man. I'm kind of a traditionalist in some ways. The good old yellow Peeps. Take me back home man. You know? Yeah.
- Paul: [01:18:59](#) And you're a classic guy, man. I figured, I figured. And then lastly, I will send you some awesome stuff from Bravo Sierra.

They are a sponsor. They have antibacterial body wipes. So if you don't get to leave your house for a long time, they will be on their way to you as well. And you can ---

- Jeffrey: [01:19:15](#) ... in the pocket, man. I ordered four gallons online about six weeks ago. This is my kit. When I go, I got this, I got my mask over there, you know? hey man.
- Paul: [01:19:29](#) We always want inspiring, iconic, important Americans as guests on the show, and you are one. Since I started this show, I really wanted to have this conversation. You've been doing so much for this country, for this globe, for this community. I really consider you a role model for me and so many other people, and I'm just grateful for you man, grateful for your leadership, for your voice, for your talent, for your generosity. And in this moment, to see you continuing to find ways to use your talents and use your network to move the country forward is a real source of hope and inspiration at a time when folks really need it. Thank you for all you do, and thank you for joining me on this program. I'm going to continue to support you in any way I can. We're going to let people support the charities that you're involved in, but thank you man for all you do.
- Jeffrey: [01:20:15](#) Well, I appreciate all that. Just trying to be like you bro. I mean just trying to do my part here and try to avoid sitting here, grizzled and getting fat.
- Paul: [01:20:27](#) We're just too old. I mean, we're not Lord Jeffs anymore. So we're mammoths. And the motto of the school is that terrorists are radiant. Let them bring light upon the world, and you are bringing light everywhere you go, man.
- Jeffrey: [01:20:41](#) Well, well come on. Now you're-
- Paul: [01:20:45](#) Nope. That's it. I'm going to leave it there and say-
- Jeffrey: [01:20:47](#) Okay. All right, all right, that's a lot. That's a lot.
- Paul: [01:20:50](#) We'll say, keep bringing the light. Thank you to your son. Thank you to the turtles.
- Jeffrey: [01:20:53](#) Here's my light. Here's my boy here. He just stepped back in. So yeah.
- Paul: [01:20:56](#) His dad's a good man. But stay frosty, my friend. Thank you for doing this.

Jeffrey: [01:20:59](#) Hey cool. Paul, thank you so much. I appreciate you man. Appreciate your voice in all this, and of course all the work you've done, man. And I'm just honored to be here with you, bro.

Paul: [01:21:09](#) Excellent. Thank you my friend.

Jeffrey: [01:21:11](#) All right, see you man.

Paul: [01:21:12](#) All right. We're going to end this here.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:21:18]